

LETTER BY Timorese Students in Jakarta to President of Portugal

Your Excellency,

Before beginning our request the undersigned present our greetings and respects.

It is ten years since East Timor was invaded and occupied militarily by Indonesia. In spite of this, the people of Timor have continued to resist this barbarous invasion and struggled to realise their highest aspirations.

This heroic resistance not only takes the form of military resistance but has involved setting up in their midst underground networks to channell information to the outside world, giving news of the barbarous practices of the Indonesian aggressors against the people of Timor such as massacres, killings, violations, birth control, and transmigration.

One of these groups was detected and uncovered. As a result some of the members were arrested and punished as follows:

1. On 3 September 1986, about 10.30 am, Antonino Goncalves, 34, was detained at the Catholic University of Atma Jaya, Jakarta, without the knowledge of the University administration. After his arrest he was taken to a local detention centre in an enclosed car with his eyes blindfolded as if he were a thief or murderer. For a month and 8 days of detention he was submitted to heavy labour.
2. On 16 September 1986, Joao Freitas da Camara, 29, born in Zumalai-Suai, was assaulted and captured in his house in the southern suburb of Jakarta at midnight. He was taken to a detention centre in an enclosed car with his eyes blindfolded. For 25 days he was submitted to heavy labour.
3. On 17 September 1986, at 5.00 am, Francisco de Sousa, 30, born in Viqueque, was also captured and taken to a detention centre with his eyes blindfolded in an enclosed car. For 24 days he too was submitted to heavy labour.
All three were forced to sign a 'Berita acara' or Interrogation report, the purpose of which was to deny the barbarous and inhuman treatment to which they were subjected during their interrogation.
4. On 11 October 1986, we were suddenly released from detention on condition that we did not tell our colleagues at University about our experiences during detention. We were instructed to explain to our colleagues when they enquired that we were always well treated and not subjected to coercion.
5. From 12 - 19 October, 1986 we have been persecuted daily by Indonesian secret agents who followed us everyday between university and home, using radio to keep in contact, thereby restricting our freedom and social contacts.
6. On 16 October 1986 an Indonesian secret agent appeared at our house and invited us and two others to leave for Dili on 22 October for a holiday and rest. The air tickets would be provided free. This invitation was the final reason for our decision to immediately request 'political asylum' at the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta because we knew that if we were taken back to Timor our death was inevitable as had happened to many of our brothers because communications with the outside world are difficult and restricted. Our suspicions about this malicious tactic were confirmed because the invitation was given at a time we were preoccupied with our studies.

7. Abilio Sereno, 29, from Ainaro and Fernando da Silva, 27, from Dili, were also harassed by secret agents with a view to arrest. However this failed due to pressure from the international community and particularly from Amnesty International. However the secret agents continued to harass them. For example, on 17 October 1986, when Arnoldus Kolimali came to our house with the invitation referred to in item 6, these two were also invited to go to Dili with free air tickets. This surprised them because they were not considered to be involved. Free tickets had never before been offered to Timorese students studying in Jakarta.

8. On 20 October 1986 we entered the Dutch Embassy and requested political asylum. However our request for protection was rejected by the Ambassador who threatened us that he would call the police to force us to leave if we did not depart. This threat worsened on 21 October at midnight when the four undersigned were suddenly awakened from sleep by an urgent call from the Ambassador. Accompanied by to Embassy officials we entered a room where the Ambassador was waiting for us and he immediately threatened us to leave saying he would call the police to forcibly remove us because he could not give us political asylum.

On the morning of 22nd four people came to threaten us including Dr Gerard Bonang, Himawan Djaja, John Tinggogoy and an Indonesian Government representative whose name is not known saying that the police were ready to forcibly remove us at the order of the Dutch Ambassador if we did not leave. Before all these threats we had decided to leave the Embassy, on one condition. We would wait for the passports which were already being processed by the Embassy to enable us to leave Indonesia and fly to Portugal.

9. In addition to the above factors which were mainly responsible for our decision to request political asylum, we were influenced by other past events:

a. In December 1977 an amnesty was given by President Suharto saying that all those who surrendered would not be punished or killed. However some surrendered and lost their lives. This happened, for example, to our brothers Filomeno Alves, Leopoldo, Hermenegildo Alves, Afonso Moniz, and our sister Maria Goretti, and many others, who trusting in the presidential amnesty were apprehended and killed for having fought for justice.

b. Others today are in prison in Comarca and Atauro as well as in Cipinang and Tangerang in Jakarta for criticising and protesting the barbarous practices of Javanese troops in Timor. These and others such as Mr Joao Martins, head of the Social Service Department and Vice-General Secretary of Apodeti who was recently arrested in Dili and detained in custody from 1-4 November 1986; David Seixas, Commander of the 744 Indonesian battalion who was arrested in Dili and transferred to Cipinang, and three others.

c. In particular we students were suffering pressure from the Indonesian authorities intended to obstruct our departure for Portugal. In spite of this we remain firm in our decision and since our forcible removal from the Dutch Embassy we have decided to sever completely our relations with the Indonesian Government, placing our confidence and hopes in Portugal which is directly responsible for the future of Timor.

10. At present our movements are strictly controlled. At home we receive frequent phone calls from unknown people wanting to know which local church we attend on Sundays and if we would like to attend

a morning or evening mass, what hour we normally leave. Phone calls were made on 25 October at 8.30 PM by an unknown person who gave the name Roberto Carlos, on 29 October by a person named Alberto and on 30 October by a girl. All this caused us grave mental terror causing us to spend more time at home rather than going out.

Because of everything we have said above, we request your Excellency to kindly hasten the processing of our departure for Portugal.

The international community does not recognise integration because the people of Timor want Portugal to return to continue decolonisation.

So once again we request your Excellency to have the goodness to save our lives as well as the lives of the Timorese people whose situation is desperate.

We conclude our request to your Excellency with hopes that a rapid and favourable solution can be given to us and the people of East Timor who have endured 10 years of constant massacres by barbarous Indonesian forces and who will be exterminated if help is not forthcoming.

Jakarta, 20 November 1986

Fernando da Silva
Joao Freitas da Camara
Abilio Oliveira Sereno
Antonino Goncalves.